SUNY Cortland Baseball
NCAA Div. III Regional Championship Round – SUNY Cortland vs. Ithaca College
Sunday, May 22, 2005; Falcon Park; Auburn, N.Y.

FINAL SCORE: Cortland 9, Ithaca 7

AUBURN, N.Y. – Cortland jumped out to a 9-0 lead after six innings, then held off a furious Ithaca rally to defeat the Bombers, 9-7, in the championship round of the NCAA Division III regional at Auburn's Falcon Park. With the regional title, the Red Dragons (39-7-1) advance to the Division III World Series for the seventh time and the first since five straight appearances from 1997-2001. Cortland will face Wooster (Ohio) on Friday, May 27, at 7:45 p.m. (8:45 Eastern) in a first round game at Fox Cities Stadium in Grand Chute, Wis. (just outside of Appleton). The eight-team, double-elimination series will run through Tuesday, May 31.

Ithaca finishes the season with a 25-16-2 record. The Bombers, who were vying for their first World Series appearance since 1994, have been the regional runner-up six times in the last seven years.

Cortland sophomore first baseman and tournament Most Outstanding Player Travis Robinson (Ilion) was 3-for-5 with a homer, two doubles and three RBI in the title game. Robinson batted .389 with three doubles, a homer and five RBI and played errorless ball during Cortland's 4-0 run through the regional.

Four other Red Dragons were on the all-tournament team – senior outfielder Pat D'Auria (Upper Nyack/Nyack), junior third baseman Ricky Piovesan (East Norwich/St. Dominic), junior outfielder Zach Tacelli (Latham/Shaker) and sophomore pitcher Jon Rockfeld (Islip Terrace/East Islip). D'Auria was 1-for-3 with a walk and three runs scored in the championship game. He batted .500 in the tournament with three walks and a .643 on-base percentage. Piovesan went 3-for-4 in the finals with a double, a walk and three RBI and batted .357 with four walks and a team-high seven RBI in the tournament.

Tacelli was 1-for-4 with a three-run double on Sunday and batted .308 with six RBI in four games. He also reached base three times on walks and three times being hit by pitches for a .526 on-base percentage. Rockfeld was the winning pitcher in the title game, allowing five hits and one walk in six and one-third innings. He gave no runs and only two hits in the first six innings as Cortland built its lead.

Ithaca's all-tournament team representatives were outfielder Eric Maya, second baseman Marty O'Boyle and pitcher Matt Lavoie. Maya was 2-for-3 with three RBI on Sunday and batted .412 with a tournament-high nine RBI in five games. O'Boyle went 2-for-5 with two RBI in the finals and hit .450 with five RBI in five games. The senior extended his hitting streak to 26 consecutive games, finishing one game short of the school record held by Ron Amato. Lavoie pitched a complete-game seven-hitter on Saturday night in a win over Skidmore that advanced the Bombers to Sunday's championship round.

Also named to the regional all-tournament team were Ryan Snyder and Ben Miller from Pitt-Bradford and Michael Rivers from Skidmore.

Cortland took a 1-0 lead in the third inning when D'Auria reached second on a one-out throwing error and scored on Piovesan's two-out single to left center. The Red Dragons exploded for four runs in both the fifth and sixth innings to extend the lead to 9-0.

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In the fifth, Will Groff (Queensbury) led off with a single and scored on Robinson's double down the right field line. D'Auria was hit by a pitch, Steve Newman (Henrietta/Rush-Henrietta) bunted the runners over and Piovesan was intentionally walked to load the bases. Tacelli, who struck out in his first two at-bats, lined a double to left center to drive in all three runs, with Piovesan barely sliding under the tag at home.

In the sixth, Jimmy Basnight (East Norwich/St. Dominic) led off with an infield single and, two batters later, Robinson homered over the right field fence. D'Auria singled to left, Newman reached on a bunt single to first and Piovesan doubled to left center to drive in both runners.

Jarred Flaherty, Ithaca's third pitcher of the game, kept the Bombers within striking distance with three and two-third innings of hitless relief. He hit the first batter he faced in the sixth, then retired the final 11 Cortland batters, three by strikeout.

Ithaca made a game of it with five runs in the bottom of the seventh. P.J. Canestrari singled with one out, Kyle Rutherford was hit by a pitch and Eric Ferguson singled to load the bases. Bryan Stamboly then singled to left to drive in a run and knock out Rockfeld. Maya followed with a double down the left field line off Jason Chyr (Vermont/V-V-S) to drive in two runs and O'Boyle singled through the right side to score two more.

In the ninth, Stamboly led off with a double over Tacelli's head in right and Maya doubled to left to drive him in. Sophomore Justin Mattes (Queensbury) entered the game for the Red Dragons and struck out the next two batters. Josh Smith hit a grounder to second which looked like the potential final out, but was barely safe after a fielding error. Rob Raux then nearly tied the game when his opposite-field blast to right landed only a few feet from being a three-run homer. He finished with an RBI double on the play, placing runners on second and third with the Bombers down 9-7. Junior Nick McPartland (Beacon) relieved Mattes and got Canestrari to ground out to second for the final out and his second save of the tournament and fourth of the season.

Cortland Notebook: The Red Dragons have won the NCAA New York Regional title each of the three years it has been held in Auburn, with all three championship-round victories coming against Ithaca...Cortland's 39 wins this season are the second-highest total in school history and one short of the school record, set during a 40-5 season in 1998.

Ithaca Notebook: Raux's double in the ninth extended his streak of reaching via hit, walk or hit by pitch to 34 straight games...O'Boyle's 69 hits in 2005 (including a tournament-high nine in five games) are the third highest single-season total by a Bomber, and his 173 career hits are 10th on Ithaca's career charts.